

REMARKS

This Amendment, submitted in response to the non-final Office Action dated September 14, 2004, is believed to be fully responsive to the points of rejection raised therein. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration on the merits is respectfully requested.

The Specification is amended above to remove the informalities noted by the Examiner.

Claims 1-13, 15-25, 27-29, and 31-39 are pending. Claims 14, 26 and 30 have been cancelled. Claims 10, 13, 15, 25, 27, 29, 31, 38 and 39 have been amended. No new matter has been added by the amendments.

Claims 10 and 29 have been rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph. Claims 13, 22, 23, and 24 have been rejected under 35 USC 102(b) over Japanese Patent No. 2-167,623 (Futamura). Claims 25 and 26 have been rejected under 35 USC 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,127,642 (Gleason). Claims 27, 28 and 29 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) over Gleason, in view of Japan Patent No. 2001-38,533 (Yamada). Claims 1-9, 11 and 12 have been allowed. The Examiner indicated that Claim 10 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph. The Examiner indicated that Claims 14-21 and 30-39 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants respectfully submit the following remarks in support of the patentability of the claims.

1. Claims 1-12:

Claim 10 has been amended to remove the informality noted by the Examiner. Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-12 are in condition for allowance.

2. Claims 13 and 15-24:

Claim 13 has been amended to include the additional recitations of original Claim 14. Original Claim 14 has been cancelled, and Claim 15 has been amended to depend from Claim 13. The Examiner indicated that Claims 14-21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 13 and 15-21 are in condition for allowance. Further, as Claims 22-24 depend from

Claim 13, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are also in condition for allowance.

3. Claims 25, 27-29 and 31-39:

Claim 25 has been amended to include the additional recitations of original 30. Claim 29 has been amended to recite that the guide rod has a longitudinal axis which is aligned parallel to the longitudinal axis of the electrode. Claims 27-29 and 31-39 depend from Claim 25. The Examiner indicated that Claims 30-39 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 25, 27-29 and 31-39 are in condition for allowance.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims, namely Claims 1-13, 15-25, 27-29, and 31-39 are in condition for allowance.

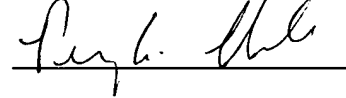
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is needed to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number below.

Last, please charge any fees required for the entry of this Amendment to the Assignee's Deposit Account No. 07-0868.

Respectfully submitted,



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Oct. 15, 2004
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